

City of Alexandria
Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Community Garden Plot Policies: 2016 Gardening Season

The City of Alexandria ("City") provides land for Community Gardens on City property and offers individual garden plots for annual rental through the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. Community gardening is one way that the City is helping to increase Alexandria residents' access to locally grown, environmentally sustainable foods as part of the [Healthy Food Alexandria initiative](#). Community gardens provide a location for residents to grow an array of fruits, vegetables, and flowers for their personal enjoyment.

This document, the Community Garden Plot Policies ("Plot Policies"), details the terms and conditions for use of a community garden plot. Gardeners must comply with all laws and City park rules and regulations, including those herein, and interact with cooperation and courtesy toward other Gardeners. Any questions or concerns about the following terms and conditions should be directed to the City Representative whose contact information is provided at the end of this document. Organic gardening practices are required at all City Community Gardens; please visit the following website, www.chinquapingardens.org for information regarding organic gardening practices.

It is imperative that you provide an email to the City representative and keep him/her informed of any change. Gardening information, plot application and registration, plot monitoring and citation letters, and other official correspondence is primarily conducted via email. It is your responsibility to read City emails and respond accordingly, and to do so in a timely fashion.

1. Season. The official gardening season runs from March 1 through November 30. The water for the gardens will be turned on about April 15 and turned off about November 15. These dates may vary in years with unusually mild or severe weather conditions or due to other factors. Although the City provides water by way of hose bibs (spigots) throughout the Garden, irrigation of each plot and the proper use and storage of hoses is the responsibility of each Gardener.

Typically, important dates are as follows:

- December: Renewal notices are sent out by the City to current Gardeners who are being invited to return. Gardeners must apply for a plot for the upcoming growing season by the announced deadline.
- January: Plots are assigned to returning Gardeners.
- January - February: Available plots are assigned to Gardeners on the Waiting List.
- March 1: Gardening season officially begins. Gardeners may access plots.
- Nov. 30: Gardening season officially ends. End of Season Clean-up must be completed.

2. Fees. Rental permit fees are subject to the provisions of the City of Alexandria's Resource Allocation and Cost Recovery Policy and are subject to change annually by the City. For the 2016 gardening season, the Rental Permit Fees are:

- Resident: Full Plot \$90
- Resident: Half Plot \$60
- Non-resident: Full Plot \$180
- Non-resident: Half Plot \$120

Additional Costs: Due to the seasonal nature of the gardening activities and the complexities associated with record-keeping, registration, fee processing, and maintenance of the property, community garden plot fees are not subject to a refund. Furthermore, Gardeners who fail to follow the Garden Plot Policies, or who do not regularly and properly maintain their plot, will be responsible for any and all costs incurred by the City associated with bringing the plot into compliance. These costs may be hundreds of dollars to pay a contractor to provide services such as hand weeding, debris removal, or weed growth barrier installation.

3. City Resident Priority. City residents will be given preference over non-residents with regard to the rental and assignment of garden plots. Non-residents (including those who have rented plots in the past) may not rent a plot until all City residents, including those renewing plot rentals and those on the Waiting List, have been given the opportunity to do so. Current non-resident Gardeners who have rented plots as non-residents continuously for five (5) or more years are exempt from this requirement and may continue to request to rent a plot if they comply with all other guidelines and remain in good standing.

4. Registration and Assignment Process. Only one (1) garden plot may be requested or assigned per household. Gardeners who comply with the City's Community Garden Plot Policies and meet all qualifications for renewal will, under most circumstances and at the sole discretion of the City, be invited back the next year to renew rental of the same plot. Failure of any Gardener to submit the required application and plot permit rental fee by the publicly-announced deadline, or failure to provide all of the information requested by the City, will result in the application being denied and the plot forfeited. Under limited circumstances, the City may ask a Gardener to maintain, or assist with the maintenance of, more than one plot on a temporary basis.

The renewal process usually begins in December with the sending of renewal invitations to Gardeners. The invitation will include an application form that must be completed and returned to the City with appropriate payment by the deadline specified on the form. All Gardeners must provide the City with their current mailing address, physical (residence) address, e-mail address, and phone number on the application form. Failure to respond by the deadline may result in re-assignment of a Gardener's plot. The City is not responsible for renewal invitations that are not delivered due to incorrect or out-of-date contact information, or that are not responded to by the announced deadlines. Gardeners should contact the City Representative if they have any questions about the plot rental/renewal process or the timing of communications.

Immediately following assignment of plots to returning gardeners, the City will make available to those on the Waiting List all remaining unassigned plots. Available plots will include any plots not renewed for the current year and plots forfeited by failure to comply with the Community Garden Plot Policies. Forfeited plots will be re-assigned without reimbursement. Issuance of new rental permits and assignment of available plots usually begins towards the end of January.

5. Waiting List. All persons not currently renting a garden plot who are interested in obtaining a garden plot rental must fill out completely an official application form, including the applicant's permanent residence address among other information. (The form is available at www.alexandriava.gov/CommunityGardens and on the Chinguapin Gardens website at www.chinguapinggardens.org). The City will maintain a Waiting List of prospective gardeners who have submitted completed applications. The Waiting List will be maintained in the order the completed applications are received by the City, with earlier applications having priority. When plots are available for assignment, the City will offer plots to those on the Waiting List in sequential order and plots will be assigned to those who respond within the time period proscribed in the offer. Prospective gardeners who fail to respond in the allotted time or who choose not to rent an available plot will be removed from the Waiting List. The City is not responsible for plot rental invitations that are not delivered due to incorrect or out-of-date contact information, or that are not opened or responded to promptly. Plots will be offered to non-residents only when there are no City residents on the Waiting List who wish to obtain a plot permit.

6. Boundaries. Full-size plots are approximately 15 x 20 feet. Half-size plots are approximately 10 x 15 feet. Gardeners shall not expand the limits of their plot, and they shall not intrude into adjacent plots or the surrounding paths. The City retains the right to reassign plots, realign the layout of the Garden area (including individual plots), modify the size, shape, and total area of any plot in any Community Garden, eliminate plots, revise this policy, or otherwise make changes to the Community Garden and its operation in order to meet the City's needs. As the City takes steps to straighten, level, and improve the safety of the paths in the gardens, the boundaries of some plots will be realigned. Gardeners must adjust any fences or bordering materials to comply with the new boundary alignment.

7. Appearance and Access. The Community Garden is public parkland. The garden must be kept clean and reasonably free from weeds and other unsightly debris. Weeds taller than twelve (12) inches in the plots are a violation of City Code Section 5-9-2. Each Gardener is responsible not only for maintaining the appearance of his/her plot, but also for keeping the paths on all sides of the plot well-groomed and free of weeds (growing or pulled), stakes, rocks, tools, or other materials. Storage of any materials or trash on the paths is not permitted. Gardeners must keep plants contained within the plot boundaries and may not block paths, from underfoot to overhead, with plants or other materials that might impede access to other gardens in any way.

8. Management and Monitoring of all Community Garden Plots. The City owns and manages the Community Garden plots. At Chinguapin Gardens, an advisory board of gardeners assists with operation and management of the gardens, particularly by performing inspections of the plots for compliance with the Community Garden Plot

Policies. Gardeners at Holmes Run may find it desirable to form an Advisory Board for their Community Garden in order to cooperatively manage the Community Garden with the City. Gardeners at each City Community Garden may be called upon to serve on a monitoring team during the gardening season or to assist with other volunteer work at their Community Garden. The City periodically will monitor all garden plots to ensure proper utilization and compliance with Community Garden Plot Policies, and may take action as described in Section 9.

9. Plot Monitoring and Violations. Plot monitoring for compliance with the Plot Policies by volunteer Gardeners and the City will occur periodically throughout the season.

At Chinquapin Gardens, plot monitoring by volunteers organized by the Advisory Board and the City will occur five (5) times during the season.

Volunteer Gardener monitoring usually is held on Saturday mornings, with an Advisory Board Member serving as team leader. Gardeners are encouraged to volunteer to assist with the monitoring, and can indicate that preference on the plot registration form submitted at the beginning of the season.

All plots must show evidence of gardening by mid-April. This does not mean the plot has to be fully dug and planted, but it must be evident that the plot is being worked and that weeds are being actively controlled throughout the plot. During the season, plots must be worked and maintained and crops must be harvested in a timely manner. Permit holders for plots that are found to be in violation of the Plot Policies will be notified by the City at the contact email address provided during registration and given a reasonable time to correct the infraction. Failure to comply with the corrective measures within the timeframes specified may subject the Gardener to loss of the plot without reimbursement.

Gardeners unable to maintain their plot should request a release (in writing) from the City for the remainder of the growing season, or provide a temporary, substitute Gardener to maintain the plot for that season. Gardeners are responsible for costs incurred by the City as the result of their failure to properly maintain their plot. The City reserves the right to re-assign a plot at any time. The City will make re-assignments utilizing the Waiting List.

10. Disposal of Materials. All debris must be placed into the cans that are distributed throughout the Garden, or the City Solid Waste crews will not remove it.

There are two colors of containers which will accept different materials:

GREEN (labeled "Yard Waste") These are only for weeds, grass, leaves, vegetables, dead plants, and similar organic matter. All of these materials will be recycled/reused by T&ES with other yard waste they collect in the City. Do not put plastic bags or other trash in these containers. Trash in these containers will cause the material to be rejected.

BLACK (labeled “Trash”) These are only for non-organic waste such as plastic pots and flats, plastic bags, wood pieces, food waste, metal objects, and similar items that are not yard waste. Yard waste in these containers will cause the material to be rejected.

Any discarded rocks should not be put in trash cans, but should be placed in designated rock piles. At Chinquapin, this is located near the beehive area on the north side of the lower garden area. At Holmes Run, rocks should be placed next to (not in) the trash cans so they can be identified and removed by City staff.

Diseased/blighted plants should not be recycled/turned into mulch/compost as the pathogens from those plants will be transferred back into the soil where the mulch/compost is applied. Place such items into a black trash bag and discard with other non-organic waste in the BLACK Trash cans.

11. Animals. Animals (except seeing-eye and service dogs) are prohibited in garden plot areas. All animals (including seeing-eye and service dogs) are required by law to be leashed. Owners/handlers must pick up after their animals.

12. Timely Harvest/Rodents/Mosquitoes. Crops must be harvested as they mature since rotting produce attracts rodents and other pests. Only rodent-resistant compost enclosures are permitted. Birdbaths are prohibited since they provide standing water that attracts mosquitoes. Ensure that faucets are turned off, watering cans are emptied, and puddles on plastic weed barriers are swept clear to reduce mosquito infestation. Minimization of rodents, mosquitoes, and other pests is in everyone’s best interest; please be alert to steps you can take to reduce their presence.

13. Prohibited Practices.

- a. Chemical pesticides (including fungicides, herbicides weed killers, and insecticides) are prohibited. Only organic practices and materials may be used.
- b. The use of tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and chewing tobacco is prohibited in the garden area. Mosaic virus disease common to tobacco can infect tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, and can spread to plants in other gardens.
- c. Illegal drug-producing plants are prohibited. Gardeners convicted of growing drug-producing plants will lose their plots without reimbursement.
- d. No plant-supporting structure may be taller than 72 inches or extend beyond the limits of the garden plot.
- e. Planting shrubs or trees that grow to a medium or large size is prohibited. Existing trees and shrubs must be pruned so they do not shadow neighboring plots, overhang the plot boundaries, or interfere with movement on the paths.
- f. No unsightly, tattered, garish, or obtrusive materials may be installed or suspended in the vicinity of any garden plot. This includes cans on wires, reflectors, twirling pie plates.
- g. The use of carpeting, pressed board, arsenic-treated wood and other similar materials on paths or plots is prohibited. Some of these materials might provide cover for rodents and possibly present a hazard to other Gardeners

- navigating the paths. Carpeting, pressed board and some pressure-treated wood often contain hazardous chemicals that may leach into the soil as they deteriorate. Lumber treated with arsenic compounds is prohibited.
- h. Avoid leaving personal property in the garden. Tools, roto-tillers, and other garden equipment pose a safety hazard and invite theft.
 - i. Running water or sprinklers should not be left unattended.
 - j. Birdfeeders and birdbaths are prohibited.
 - k. No standing water, including in watering cans and on plastic weed barriers, is allowed.
 - l. Garden plots are for individual use only, and must not be used for business or commercial purposes. Produce from the gardens is for personal use and should not be sold or otherwise used for or in commercial activity.

14. Trellises and Fencing. Trellises, plant-support structures, fencing, and all other non-plant structures in the plots, should be constructed of lightweight materials that are self-supporting and do not lean into or obstruct adjacent paths or neighboring plots. Fences should be constructed of materials with uniform appearance and height. Fencing material must not block paths or create a trip or other hazard. The height of fences is limited to seventy-two (72) inches. No permanent structure may be built in any garden plot. No structure shall be taller than seventy-two (72) inches. The City must approve any variation from these standards in writing. Existing fences or garden structures in violation of these Policies must be removed or modified by the Gardener, or they will be removed by the City. See Section 17 below for requirements associated with removal of these items at the end of the gardening season.

15. Vandalism/Damage/Theft. Report incidents of vandalism, tampering with plots without permission, theft of produce, or any other property destruction immediately to the Alexandria Police Department. (Non-emergency number is 703-746-4444.) Be sure to include a description of any person(s) and/or vehicle, and the license plate number, when possible. In addition, report the incident to the City Representative listed at the end of these Plot Policies.

16. Liability. By obtaining a plot rental permit within a City of Alexandria community garden, Gardeners agree to hold harmless the City of Alexandria, and the Chinquapin Organic Gardens Advisory Board at Chinquapin Gardens, for any and all liability which may be attributed to the Gardener, or an authorized third party, as a result of utilizing a City garden plot.

17. End of Season Clean Up. The gardening season officially ends November 30. Dead plants, crop remains, and other debris must be removed by that date. Stakes, tomato cages, and other plant supporting structures must be removed from the ground. Gardeners are encouraged to take these materials home, but those who expect to return the following year may leave stakes and other materials stacked neatly in the center of the plot away from paths. Cold frames, fencing, and trellises needed to support certain perennial plants may be left in place if approved by the City in writing. Rodent-resistant compost enclosures also may remain in the plots of Gardeners who expect to return the following year. Hoses must be neatly coiled and removed from the paths.

City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Representative:

Eugene Brodetski
City of Alexandria, RPCA
Park Operations
2900-A Business Center Dr.
Alexandria, VA 22314

W: 703-746-4661

Email: Eugene.Brodetski@alexandriava.gov